

DELTA IN-CHANNEL ISLANDS WORK GROUP

A work group was established by the San Francisco Estuary Project to consider alternatives for protecting and restoring in-channel islands in the Delta.. The work group is charged with integrating the San Francisco Estuary's efforts into CALFED, finalizing a framework for future planning in the Delta, identifying demonstration sites to develop guidelines for protecting and restoring in-channel islands, and seeking stakeholder concurrence on managing in-channel islands. In order to coordinate similar goals and objectives between the work group and CALFED, the work group is providing information to the CALFED levee and channel technical team.

IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF ISLANDS FOR SPECIAL FUNDS

Funding for the levee program has two elements: baseline funding that treats all islands equally and funding for special projects. Islands that contain important attributes with high public benefit appropriate for special-projects funding are being identified. This identification process will not inhibit an island from applying for special funding but will rank islands as having high, medium, or low public-benefit value for consideration of special funding. The group identified the need to thoroughly document the purpose of the island identification and prioritization and the process for approving special funds (e.g., through the California Water Commission) and CALFED's role in funding projects.

CALFED staff presented a four-step process for the team to use in identifying and prioritizing islands:

1. Identify and adopt criteria.
2. Develop criteria information on each island ("information matrix").
3. Identify and adopt the objectives for prioritizing island attributes .
4. Rank each island's ability to meet each objective (as high, medium, or low).

CRITERIA

CALFED staff presented criteria for establishing island priorities. These criteria represent the attributes or resources that are protected by the levee system. The following list documents specific comments on the criteria and responses to those comments (*in italics*).

1. Include an island's ability to pay or meet cost-share requirements.

The criteria represent attributes that are protected by the levee system or benefits of the levee system. An island's ability to pay is an issue of "need" and will be distinguished from a "benefit". An island's needs will be considered after the islands have been identified and

prioritized. The overall process of assessing special funding needs will be presented at a future meeting.

2. Translate all the criteria into economic terms (i.e., dollars) as a common base. See some of the recent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi River Flooding studies for examples.

Some benefits are not quantifiable (e.g., human life) and the assumptions used to translate all the benefits into economic terms are debatable. For purposes of this exercise, the attributes need not be described in dollars.

3. Include the effects on neighboring areas or the cumulative benefit of protecting an island. This can be characterized as surrounding miles of levees affected and acreage of adjacent lands protected. Seepage and wind erosion from increased fetch are of concern to neighboring islands.

Benefits to neighboring islands have been included in our list of criteria as acres of adjoining islands.

4. Include existing levee conditions on the criteria list.

As discussed above for cost-sharing, the existing levee condition represents "need" instead of "benefit"; therefore, it is not included on the criteria list.

5. Include island volume to represent the cost and response time for pumping and repair. Island volume affects water quality changes and erosion.

As discussed above for cost-sharing, the volume of an island (area times elevation) does not represent a "benefit"; therefore, volume, and related island size and elevation, are not included on the criteria list.

6. Include ratio of levee miles to levee size (e.g., acres protected per levee mile). This indicates the relative benefit per levee mile.

This criterium has been added.

7. The criteria adding levees on the North Fork Mokelumne is prejudicial. Would housing units or adjacent resources cover this benefit?

To be consistent with the focus on benefit rather than need, this criterium should be disregarded. However, it has been left on the matrix for the present simply to identify islands recommended for levee improvement under DWR's North Delta Program.

8. Clarify the benefit versus impact of levee work on habitats associated with levees. The criteria list should focus on the benefits of levee maintenance.

The levees would benefit those resources internal to the island, and natural resources on the external levee slopes would be most affected by levee work. Habitat on the external side of the levee system is not protected by the levees, and therefore, has been eliminated from the criteria list.

9. Identify the uniqueness of natural resources and special-status species protected by the levees.

We have included a detailed list of the special-status species found on each island. The criterion, "natural resource areas with significant habitat value", also identifies areas determined unique or important by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

10. Consolidate the criteria used to describe agricultural lands.

We have eliminated two criteria, "irrigated agricultural lands" and "major crops" and kept "value of damageable crops" and "acres of agricultural lands". The value of damageable crops takes into consideration the crop types, and the acres of agricultural lands will include all irrigated lands.

OBJECTIVES

The islands can be ranked or prioritized by various objectives. Based on discussions at the meeting, the group identified the following objectives:

- water quality,
- agricultural production,
- ecosystems,
- life and property,
- recreation,
- resources of statewide concern (versus local or Delta-specific resources), and
- resources associated with adjacent islands.

OTHER COMMENTS

1. Coordinate levee funding with other CALFED programs, especially water conveyance alternatives and the ecosystem restoration program.
2. Distinguish between benefits internal to the Delta or source area from external considerations (e.g., water quality, adjacent/upstream resources). The "resources of statewide concern" objective is intended to satisfy this comment. CALFED staff have also recommended another objective, "resources of local or regional concern" to thoroughly address this comment.
3. A priority island application for special projects funding should consider:

- detrimental effects of island flooding, and
- beneficial features to add to the system.

ACTION ITEMS

- Participants will send Curt Schmutte their comments on the criteria list and the objectives by November 19, 1996.
- Staff will reorganize the criteria and matrix information per comments and talk to Frank Wernette (DFG) regarding ecosystem restoration objectives.

The next meeting of the levee and channel technical team will be December 10, 1996, 1:00 p.m. at 1416 Ninth Street, Room 1601.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

We need a copy of the sign in list for this.